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SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN/COUNTERNARCOTICS: ENGAGING THE PARLIAMENTARY
CN CAUCUS

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: On 25 July, the Afghan Parliamentary Counternarcotics (CN) Caucus invited NAS Director to attend their weekly meeting with the International Republican Institute (IRI). This caucus, made up of members from seven members from both houses of parliament, was briefed on current INL CN programs. They urged more communication between parliament and the international donor community and asked that they be considered for training and conferences when available. Although an ad hoc gathering, with only one member serving on a parliamentary CN committee, the caucus presented an opportunity to educate a part of Afghanistan's elected leaders on CN issues that has not heretofore engaged. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) The Afghan Parliamentary CN Caucus is an eleven member caucus, consisting of members from both houses who have an interest in CN issues; the caucus has been meeting weekly for nine months under the mentorship of IRI. Of the members present on the 25th, only Urfanullah Urfan, a MP from Kabul (Tajik) is on the Wolesi Jirga Anti-narcotics Committee. He and the other members, Burhanullah Shinwari and Babrak Shinwari from Nangarhar (Pashtun), Azita Rafat from Baghisi (Tajik), Ruzia Nial from Ghor (Hazara), Mawlawi Sayed Rahman from Laghman (Pashtun), and Sahaillah Sharifi from Khost (Pashtun), invited the NAS Director to the meeting to get a better idea of the current INL programs in country and to discuss the new CN strategy.

¶3. (SBU) During the meeting, they expressed their frustration with the lack of information from the international community on the size and scope of current CN programs. They also commented that there was little in the way of parliamentary oversight of the Ministries of Interior and Counternarcotics on the programs and that their views and ideas were not being heard. NAS Director agreed that the International Community should work to keep the Afghan Parliament better informed. He offered a brief overview of INL programs to include the Good Performer's Initiative (GPI), Counternarcotics Advisory Teams and work with the Counternarcotics Police.

¶4. (SBU) The MPs emphasized their interest in being included in the CN program development process and expressed skepticism of the executive branch's sincerity with regards to CN issues or their capacity to oversee the money. They pointed to the Counter Narcotics Trust Fund (CNTF) and GPI as examples, claiming they had only seen reports for \$2M of the reported \$39M in awards. NAS director explained that the U.S. had stopped contributing funds to the CNTF two years ago, but that GPI oversight mechanisms appear robust.

¶5. (SBU) The meeting concluded with a discussion of the new U.S. CN strategy. NAS Director explained that the new strategy did not

represent a lessening of U.S. will but rather an increase in resources, especially for agriculture assistance, public information, demand reduction, and interdiction. The MPs expressed satisfaction at this and noted that smuggling was a large problem that needed urgent attention. They concluded by requesting that NAS consider including MP CN caucus members when traveling to the provinces for CN public information events or internationally to conferences or trainings.

¶5. (SBU) COMMENT: While CN caucus members clearly appreciated the NAS brief, many of their comments showed a need for better engagement with the Afghan Parliament on CN issues. These interested parliamentarians could prove an asset from a public information perspective, especially now that the 2009 pre-planting campaign is underway. The Embassy will continue to engage this group and work on devising ways to incorporate them into PI portions of its programs.

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